

REMARKS

The Office action of June 6, 2001, has been carefully considered.

Page 4 of the specification has been amended to correct a typographical error and to identify a described element with a numeral from Figures 1 and 2.

Claims 1 through 4 have been rejected under 35 USC 102, over Castaneda et al. Applicants submit that the presently claimed invention is patentable over the cited reference.

Castaneda et al has been cited to show a pair of connecting spring plates 102 and 104 coated with gold or similar conductive materials while one end of the plates is treated with solder for connecting to a circuit while the other end is free for pressure contact.

The citation in the Office action appears to be based on Castaneda et al at column 2, lines 7 through 9, where it is stated that "[m]etallized contacts 102, 104 are preferably gold plated contacts, however other conductive metals can be used as well." Given that description, Castaneda et al appears to disclose the state of the art, which was discussed on pages 1 and 2 of the present specification, and which is shown in Figure 3. Thus, the

connecting spring plates shown in Figure 3 are made of phosphor bronze or stainless steel, and are coated with nickel by plating, and with gold by plating on top of the nickel. Further, as noted on page 2, lines 21-23 of the present specification, "since the whole surface of the connecting spring plate is coated with Au, the manufacturing cost of the spring plate becomes high."

According to the invention, only the ends of the spring plates are coated. A first end connecting portion of the spring plates is coated to enable soldering, typically with solder or gold plating. The second end connecting portion of the spring plates is coated with gold by gold plating.

In order to clarify the distinction between the claimed invention and the prior art, Claim 1 has been amended to recite that the coating with gold by gold plating is limited to the second end connecting portion, and optionally to the first end connecting portion to enable soldering.

Thus, the claimed invention is clearly distinguished from the disclosure of Castaneda et al, in which the entire spring plate shown is coated with gold. The claimed invention thus enables a reduction in cost of the spring plates, without reducing the performance of those spring plates.

Withdrawal of this rejection is accordingly requested.

Claim 1 has also been amended to change "so as to be soldered" to "to enable soldering." Claim 4 has been amended to specify that a portion of each of the connecting spring plates other than the first and second end connecting portions is coated with nickel.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant submits that the present application is now in condition for allowance. An early allowance of the application with amended claims is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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